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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 007679

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: KING POSTPONES PARLIAMENTARY SESSION

REF: A. AMMAN 7651

[B](#). AMMAN 7498

[C](#). 04 AMMAN 8195

Classified By: CDA David Hale for Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#). (SBU) The palace issued a decree September 25 postponing the start of the upcoming regular session of Parliament from October 1 until December 1. The decree cited a section of Jordan's constitution that gives the King authority to delay the convocation of Parliament by up to two months. The move was widely expected and is not unprecedented, as the palace had similarly postponed last year's parliamentary session until December (ref C). Several MPs admitted to poloff that they welcomed the delay, conceding that very little work could otherwise be accomplished due to busy Ramadan social schedules. MP Abdel Karim Dughmi (East Banker, Mafrq) - a traditionalist power broker in the Chamber of Deputies - told the press that he considered the postponement "normal" and an exercise of the King's "constitutional right."

[2](#). (C) Other MPs were not as sanguine about the decree. MP Ali Abul Sukkar (West Banker, Zarqa) of the Islamic Action Front (IAF) denounced the postponement, calling it "a suspension of the parliament's monitoring of the government." Highly critical of the recent GOJ decision to further lift fuel subsidies (ref A), the IAF was seeking to gather signatures on a petition to the lower house Speaker requesting an extraordinary session of Parliament to discuss withdrawing confidence from PM Badran's government. Had the IAF succeeded in gaining 56 signatures (i.e., over 50% of the 110 MPs in the Chamber of Deputies) - a highly unlikely prospect - the King would have been under considerable political pressure to convene an extraordinary session, but would not have been constitutionally obliged to do so. (NOTE: Under the Jordanian constitution, only the King is able to convene Parliament. Likewise, the King alone establishes the agenda of an extraordinary session. END NOTE.)

[3](#). (C) COMMENT: The decision to postpone the regular session of Parliament reflects both the ongoing National Agenda process (ref B) and the realities of Ramadan, during which legislators are notoriously distracted by social obligations and empty stomachs. According to Deputy PM Muasher, who heads the commission drafting the Agenda, the document is currently being finalized - though debate on a new elections law continues - and should be approved by King Abdullah shortly for a public release in October. As the National Agenda is expected to be the centerpiece of the next parliamentary session's agenda, it would make little sense for Parliament to convene before the document is unveiled and marketed to both MPs and the public. END COMMENT.
HALE